Essay Project 1, Draft 1 Requirements

Directions: For the first draft of Essay Project 1, you will choose from one of the topics listed below and write a 1,000-word essay that responds fully to the guidelines provided. Students with any further questions should please ask in class during designated times and direct any specific questions to the teacher via email at wvenus@gdn.edu.

This essay is due, printed out and stapled, at the beginning of class on Wednesday, September 12 for the MWF class, and on Thursday, September 13 for the TR classes.

1. In the essay “Why Looks Are the Last Bastion of Discrimination,” author Deborah L. Rhode argues that a person’s physical appearance is one of the few qualities of his or her personal identity that other people are legally within their rights to discriminate on the basis of. She makes the case that appearance discrimination is a “civil rights issue.” In your opinion, based on what you have read or what you think, do you believe appearance discrimination should qualify as a civil rights issue? Write an essay answering this question.

2. In the essay “The Shame Game,” by Barbara Ehrenreich, the author argues that the way our culture encourages us to feel about ourselves when we become unemployed is both inappropriate and unproductive. Many feel ashamed when they are unemployed, she says, even though they did nothing to bring those circumstances on themselves, and even though there is little they can do to use that shame to get a new job. For this essay, write an argument explaining what would be a better motivator than shame to improve our nation’s levels of unemployment. Note: this motivator would need to be an emotion, and not a policy. You would also need to explain why it is better.

3. In the Stephanie Ericsson essay “The Ways We Lie,” as the title implies, she details all the different versions of a “lie,” as she defines it. Importantly, she makes no key distinction between a flat-out lie (an untrue statement made by someone who knows it to be untrue when telling it) and a deceptive statement or action. Do you disagree with Ericsson that some lies and some forms of deception are sometimes better in the long run than not lying or deceiving? If so, choose one example of what you would call “a good lie,” and write an essay explaining what you thought was justified about telling it. Note: to do well on this essay, you will want to be careful to take into account the other side of your argument; explain how someone could make the argument that this “good” lie still wasn’t a good thing.

4. As we saw in Judith Ortiz Cofer’s essay, “The Myth of the Latin Woman,” a myth is a story or a set of assumptions we make about someone or something that is inaccurate, but we continue to use that myth either because it is convenient to us or because it confirms for us what we want to be true in the first place. Santa Claus is one example we discussed in class of a myth. We also discussed that a myth is not necessarily a lie, but that a myth has many of the same qualities of a lie. For this essay, choose two different stories or sets of assumptions – one of which you would call a myth, and one of which you would call a lie – and write an essay explaining the difference between an myth and a lie to you, using those stories or sets of assumptions as examples.
5. One form of deception, from Ericsson’s point of view, might be advertising. After all, advertising is all about emphasizing certain, favorable details of a product and downplaying certain other, less-than-favorable details. You might also say that advertisements sell you on a myth – a myth about yourself, your society, about the way you are or ought to be. Often all of these things are accomplished through the use of details. Choose a word or phrase from a single advertisement, and write an essay explaining how and why that word or phrase or detail is deceptive. Note: the key for doing well on this essay is to take very seriously the requirement that you stick with a single word, detail, or phrase.

6. As a society of national and popular culture, we have developed several slang expressions and words over the last century that have come and gone with time. For example, many historians have pointed to the expression “23 skidoo” from the early twentieth century as the first of these. (“23 skidoo” is supposed to have meant something like “get out while the getting is good.”) Obviously, we don’t say that anymore because it has faded in popularity for several reasons. For this essay, however, choose a slang expression or word that has also fallen out of popularity, and write an essay explaining why you think it should make a comeback. Note: this essay’s strength will be based on how well you explain its relevance, so you shouldn’t bother making the case that “23 skidoo” should make a comeback just because “it’s funny to me” or because “it’s still relevant.”

These questions all involve many of the principles of classification and definition we have been talking about so far this semester, so you want to answer them in your essay by approaching your chosen topic from the points of view that we have been covering in class thus far.

**Minimum Assignment Requirements:** Your essay should answer the topic question carefully; be careful not to exclude any part of it or answer it differently than it is asking you to answer it. Your essay should also have a specific thesis statement near the end of the introductory paragraph. You cannot expect a grade better than a D if you do not meet these minimum requirements.

**Special Assignment Requirements:** Below there are listed each of this assignment’s special requirements, along with their numbers and the points deducted for each requirement not met.

1) Every line is double-spaced (-1 point)
2) It begins with a properly formatted MLA heading\(^1\) (-2 points)
3) There are properly formatted MLA headers on each page\(^2\) (-2 points)
4) It has a title (-1 point)
5) It is stapled (-1 point)

---

\(^1\) See p. 449 of PHRG for an example of an MLA heading.

\(^2\) Also see p. 449-54 of PHRG for examples of properly formatted MLA headers.